

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 ACDA-19 IO-13 RSR-01 /123 W

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P R 021555Z JUL 73

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 530

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 106

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. TWO HUNDRED TEN CANDIDATES VIED FOR 78-SEAT ASSEMBLY IN ELECTION HELD JUNE 28. DUE TO COMPLEXITIES OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM OF VOTING USED, COUNTING CONTINUED FOR TWO DAYS BEFORE FINAL RESULTS WERE KNOWN. OVERALL POLL AMOUNTED TO 72 PER CENT OF QUALIFIED VOTERS. VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOTS LARGELY ON SECTARIAN LINES: PROVO-INSPIRED CAMPAIGN FOR SPOILED BALLOTS WAS FLOP (OVERALL ONLY 2 PERCENT, ALTHOUGH HIGHER LOCALLY IN WEST BELFAST). DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS WAS AS FOLLOWS: UNIONIST 22: SDLP 19: UNIONISTS (NOT OFFICIAL) 10: ALLIANCE 8: DULC 8: VULC 7: OTHER LOYALIST COALITION 2: NILP 1: OTHER LOYALIST 1.

2. UNIONISTS WILL FORM LARGEST BLOC IN ASSEMBLY, CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY SDLP, WHICH DID BETTER THAN EXPECTED. LOYALIST COALITION OF DULC AND VULC MAY, HOWEVER, BE LARGEST BLOC, IF IT CAN OBTAIN SUPPORT OF SOME OF NON-OFFICIAL UNIONISTS (E.E. THOSE WHO REFUSED TO SIGN PARTY PLEDGE) AND OTHER LOYALISTS. MODERATE, CENTRIST, NONSECTARIAN ALLIANCE PARTY, WITH 8 SEATS, DID NOT DO AS WELL AS EXPECTED. NILP, ALSO
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NONSECTARIAN, ALSO DID POORLY, WINNING ONLY ONE SEAT.

NOTEWORTHY REJECTION OF ALL CANDIDATES ASSOCIATED WITH
"HARD MAN" ORGANISATIONS ON EITHER SIDE.

3. POLITICIANS WITH ESTABLISHED REPUTATIONS WERE IN ALMOST
ALL CASES ELECTED (E.G. FAULKNER, BRADFORD, BROOKE, MCIVOR,
WEST, KILFEDEER, TAYLOR (UNIONISTS): PAISLEY, CRAIG (LOYALIST
COALITION): COOPER (ALLIANCE): FITT, (NILP). NOTABLE LOSER
WAS ALLIANCE PARTY LEADER PHELM ONEILL.
COMMENT: ELECTION, NOT SURPRISINGLY, CONFIRMED DISARRAY ON
PROTESTANT/UNIONIST SIDE. AS SEEN FROM FIGURES IN PARA. 1,
ABOVE, THEY WERE SPLIT INTO SIX GROUPS, THEIR DIFFERENCES
TRACING TO VARIOUS SHADES OF ACCEPTANCE AND/OR REJECTION OF
ARRANGEMENTS FOR GOVERNANCE OF NORTHERN IRELAND FORESEEN BY
WHITE PAPER AND CONSTITUTION BILL. ON CATHOLIC/NATIONALIST
SIDE, IN A BIT OF A SURPRISE, VOTE WENT SOLIDLY TO SDLPM
NO OTHER PARTY ON THAT SIDE FIELDDED A WINNER. ELECTION SAW
VIRTUAL DEMISE OF LONGTIME TRADITIONAL MINORITY PARTY
-- NATIONALIST PARTY, UTTER DEFEAT OF REPUBLICAN CLUBS
(ASSOCIATED CLOSELY WITH OFFICIALS) PARTICIPATING AS LEGAL PARTY
FOR FIRST TIME, AND REPUDIATION OF PROVO IRA VIEW THAT ELECTION
SHOULD BE BOYCOTTED. REPUBLICAN-LABOUR PARTY, IN PERSON OF ITS
ONLY VIABLE POLITICIAN, PADDY KENNEDY, FELL VICTIM OF BOYCOTT
EVEN THOUGH KENNEDY WAS CLOSEST THING THERE WAS TO A PROVO
SUPPORTER RUNNING.
PENBERTHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BELFAS00106
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BELFAST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730759/aaaabrjl.tel
Line Count: 87
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: willialc
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10-Aug-2001 by maustmc>; APPROVED <20-Aug-2001 by willialc>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND
TAGS: PINT, UK, NI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005